

# A Comparison of Economic Ideas in Arthashastra and Thirukkural and Their Relevance Today

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## 1. Kautilya and Arthashastra

**Kautilya**, author of the *Arthashastra* (Science of Material Gain) lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC. North India's political landscape was transformed by the emergence of Magadha in the eastern Indo-Gangetic Plain. In 322 B.C., Magadha, under the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, began to assert its hegemony over neighboring areas. Chandragupta, who ruled from 324 to 301 B.C., was the architect of the first Indian imperial power--the Mauryan Empire (326-184 B.C.)--Whose capital was Pataliputra, near modern-day Patna, in Bihar. Ashoka, grandson of Chandragupta, ruled from 269 to 232 B.C. and was one of India's most illustrious rulers. Situated on rich alluvial soil and near mineral deposits, especially iron, Magadha was at the center of bustling commerce and trade. The capital was a city of magnificent palaces, temples, a university, a library, gardens, and parks, as reported by Megasthenes, the third-century B.C. Greek historian and ambassador to the Mauryan court. The manuscript of Arthashastra was discovered at Tanjore and Mr. Shamasastri gave its first translation in 1905 and subsequently published it as a text in 1909, as Vol.37 of the Bibliotheca Sanskrita of Mysore.

Legend states that Chandragupta's success was due, in large measure, to his Brahman minister and adviser, Kautilya (**Chanakya**). *Arthashastra* was a textbook that outlined governmental administration and political strategy. There was a highly centralized and hierarchical government with a large staff, which regulated tax collection, trade and commerce, industrial arts, mining, vital statistics, welfare of foreigners, maintenance of public places including markets and temples, and prostitutes. A large standing army and a well-developed espionage system were maintained. The empire was divided into provinces, districts, and villages governed by a host of centrally appointed local officials, who replicated the functions of the central administration.

## 2. Thiruvalluvar and Thirukkural

**Thiruvalluvar** the author of *Thirukkural* was born in the first century B.C., about 30 years before Jesus Christ in Mylapore, the village of peacocks (*Myl* in Tamil means peacock), in the present day Chennai (capital city of Tamil Nadu State), at a time when the Tamil Land was rich in culture, vivid in its life and adventurous in its commerce. Valluvars were the priests of outcaste people at that time. Tamilians take cognizance of the birth of Thiruvalluvar as a basis of Tamil calendar according to which we are now in the year 2032 of Thiruvalluvar *Aandu* (Year). *Thirukkural* is regarded as a renowned work, eulogized as a directory of code of conduct and ethics to humanity. The revered poet not only deals with the general administration, but also codified clear-cut directions to the mankind on how they should behave and act in a social, political, religious and family circles.

The numerous poems Thiruvalluvar composed were *Thirukkural*: “*Thiru*” plus “*Kural*”. The word “*Thiru*” denotes Kural’s sanctity (sacredness), and “*Kural*” means the short verses (couplets). *Thirukkural*, meaning sacred couplets, is considered equivalent to the Vedas of the Hindu Scriptures and “the Bible of the Tamil Land”. It is evident from the Kurals that Valluvar had plenty of opportunities to talk to people from abroad and to know their different cultures and religions. He has taken the best from all cultures and religions and put them together in Kural form. All the 1330 couplets portray the simple human pictures of life. The sacred verses deal very much with political and social affairs of life.

He used to keep by his side, when he sat for meals, a needle and a small cup filled with water. Once, his host asked him as to why he insisted on having these two placed by the side of the plate. He said, *"Food should not be wasted, even a grain is precious. Sometimes, stray grains of cooked rice or stray pieces of cooked vegetables fall off the plate or away from it. While I eat, I lift them off the floor, with the help of this needle and stir them in the water to clean them and eat them."*

Thiruvalluvar earned a living by weaving cloth and selling it. In the same place where Thiruvalluvar lived, there was a rich man whose son was a naughty boy. This lad came to the weaver and asked what was the price of the sari he was selling. The man replied, *"Three rupees (the price of those days)"*. The lad tore the sari into half and asked what was the price of the half of the sari. The weaver replied, *"A rupee and a half."* The lad tore it again into two and asked what was the price of the torn piece the man replied, *"It is worth twelve annas" (The three fourths of a rupee)*. The weaver did not get angry at the lad's behavior. He was calm and unruffled. The young lad was astonished. He asked the weaver, *"How did you acquire the quality of forbearance (Kshama)?"* The man replied, *"Forbearance is truth. It is right conduct. It is non-violence. It is a source of great joy. It is heaven itself. It is the summum bonum of this world. There is nothing greater than forbearance in this world."* The weaver was Thiruvalluvar and the numerous poems he composed were Thirukkural

*Arthasastra*<sup>[1]</sup> has on the whole 15 books, 150 chapters, 180 sections and 6,000 *slokas*. It is made as a compendium of almost all the *Arthasāstras*, which, in view of acquisition and maintenance of the earth, have been composed by ancient teachers. "This Sastra, bereft of undue enlargement and easy to grasp and understand has been composed by Kautilya in words the meaning of which has been definitely settled".

*Thirukkural*<sup>[2]</sup> consists 133 Chapters and each Chapter containing 10 couplets. They are grouped in 3 major parts with subgroups: 1. PART I. VIRTUE (Chapters: 1 – 38); 2. PART II. WEALTH (Chs.39 – 108); and 3. PART III. LOVE (Chs. 109 – 133). The second part is the longest and has 70 chapters on wealth covering the entire area of the state, its polity, economy, social issues and problems etc.

Kautilya and Thiruvalluvar begin their works with salutations to God. While the former starts with: "Om, Salutation to *Sukra* and *Brihaspati*,"<sup>[3]</sup> the latter has dedicated the first chapter (ten couplets) "In praise of God." The first couplet of the chapter narrates: *As the letter "A" is the first of all letters (Alphabets) and the source of energy to all letters, so the eternal God is the first in the world"*. Kautilya does not specifically talk about God in his work as Thiruvalluvar does. While describing the city plan within the fort, Kautilya mentions about the apartments to be erected for gods and goddesses in the centre of the city. According to Kautilya, the king fulfills the functions of god (Indira and Yama) upon earth; all who slight him will be punished not only by the secular arm but also by heaven. Mauryan kings including Asoka took the title of "Beloved of the Gods" (*Devanampiya*).<sup>[4]</sup> They were no doubt looked on as superior semi-divine beings. The Mauryans left behind them the tradition of the Universal King. The king was usually held in great awe and respect. We are able to understand between the lines of his pragmatic approach that Kautilya was a God-fearing man. Valluvar, on the other hand, have had a profound experience and knowledge of God and a deep devotion to Him. He performs the extraordinary feat of devoting ten couplets exclusively to submitting oneself to God, but keeping his references to the Almighty so general that He is kept universal and would not be identified exclusively with any religion.<sup>[5]</sup> One understands from his kurals that God is the Alpha (the origin) and the Omega (the end) of all existence in the universe. The God of Thirukkural is universal and non-denominational.

### 3. Economic Ideas and Their Relevance

**Kautilya** and **Thiruvalluvar** may be called contemporaries. The former was adviser (a diplomatic/administrative career) to king Chandragupta Maurya in Pataliputra, today's Patna, and the latter was an ordinary weaver (a proletariat) in today's Chennai. Both lived thousands of miles away from each other and were from different, castes, socio-political backgrounds, professions and cultures. But still, it is amazing to discover that *Arthashastra* (Science of Material Gains) and *Thirukkural* (Sacred Couplets) have a lot in common, often in identical words and phrases. It looks as if they wrote them together.

Besides various other common ideas and thoughts in their books, their economic and political thoughts are centered around the following areas: Life, role, excellence and qualities of a king; upright kingdoms; faithful citizens; the functions of governments; the duties of ministers, ambassadors, secretaries etc; planning and good process of decision-making; employment and the beauty of work; wealth and its role; a good army and the role of soldiers; agriculture and its importance; the various problems of the state like poverty, famine, crimes etc. We shall discuss and appreciate these ideas under fifteen topics, for they are unique and have great relevance for today.

**1) Life, Excellence, Qualities and Duties of a King:** These ideas are found in Book I which is on "Discipline" and Book VI which is on "the Source of Sovereign States" of *Arthashastra*. "The king who is well educated and disciplined in sciences, devoted to good government of his subjects, and bent on doing good to all people will enjoy the earth unopposed" (AI: VI).<sup>[6]</sup> 'A saintly king shakes off the aggregate of the six enemies like: lust, anger, greed, vanity, haughtiness and over joy; acquires wisdom, restrains from the organs of senses; he is disciplined, maintains his subjects; employs good ministers for assistance; and keeps away from unrighteous transactions' (AI: VII).

"If a king is energetic, his subjects will be equally energetic". 'He should keep a time table/programme each day. If he is accessible to people, he may be sure to avoid confusion and public disaffection. He keeps company with priests and teachers. "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare... the king shall ever be active and discharge his duties; the root of wealth is activity, and of evil its reverse" By his good activities, he can achieve his desired ends and abundance of wealth' (AI: XIX).

'Born of a high family, godly, possessed of valor, seeing through the medium of aged persons, virtuous, truthful, not of a contradictory nature, grateful, having large aims, highly enthusiastic, not addicted to procrastination, powerful to control his neighboring kings, of resolute mind, having an assembly of ministers of no mean quality, and possessed of a taste for discipline; these are the qualities of an inviting nature. Inquiry, hearing, perception, retention in memory, reflection, deliberation, inference and steadfast adherence to conclusions are the qualities of the intellect. Valor, determination of purpose, quickness, and probity are the aspects of a king's enthusiasm. He is possessed of a sharp intellect, strong memory, and keen mind, energetic, powerful, trained in all kinds of arts, free from vice' (AVI: I). Kautilya holds that a blind king is better than an erring king, because "a blind king can be made by his supporters to adhere to whatever line of policy he ought to. But an erring king who is bent upon doing what is against the science, brings about destruction to himself and to his kingdom by misadministration" (AVIII: II).

Thiruvalluvar describes a king's life, qualities and duties in eight chapters (eighty couplets). It was Tamil tradition to consider the king as the life and soul of society. 'A king is one who possesses the six things: an army, a people, wealth, ministers, friends and a fortress; who never fails in these four things: fearlessness, liberty, wisdom and energy; who is a man of modesty, virtues and refrains from all vices; who is free from pride, anger and lust; who does not praise

himself; who should have self control; who acquires **wealth, guards it and distributes to people**; who is accessible and kind to all; who cares for his people, protects all who come to him; whose **friends are men of virtues and knowledge**; who makes them his own; who considers his ministers **as his own eyes**; who examines their character and qualification before appointing; who shows respect even to his enemies. Unkind kings are a burden to the earth' (T39 – 46).<sup>7[7]</sup>

According to Thiruvalluvar, there are three sources of income to the king: unclaimed wealth, taxes which subjects pay, and customs collection from foreigners. In Valluvar's world, there were three channels of equitable distribution of wealth: Defence, Public works and Social service. These three cover the legitimate public expenditure for distribution. All the qualities and duties primarily attributed to the king in the Arthasastra and the Kurals will be equally applicable to all people.

This section is a lesson on good governance. In modern times, democracies have replaced Kingdoms and political parties and ministers have replaced kings. The qualities Thiruvalluvar attributes to kings are naturally expected to be found in our leaders: Ministers, MPs, MLAs, diplomats, planners, policy makers, public office-holders and so on. A few years ago, John Major, ex-British Prime Minister appointed a committee under the leadership of British lawyer, Lord Nolan to draw up a Charter of Governance in public life. This committee drew up seven principles under the Charter: 1) Selflessness in service; 2) Integrity in life; 3) Objectivity; 4) Accountability; 5) Honesty; and 6) Leadership. These are very similar to qualities of kings and ministers, which we have just seen in the Arthasastra and Kural. In the spirit of Kural and Arthasastra, today's administrators must become popular not by their money power, but by their easy access to the public and the alert performance of their duties.

Corruption in governance is the root cause of many evils today. It brings down the quality of governance and consequently the overall development of the country. A survey of seven government departments conducted in 2002 in five metros in India rated Delhi's Customs and Excise Department the most corrupt, scoring 8.6 on a scale of 10.<sup>8[8]</sup> Leaders need to be service-minded and people oriented, going beyond caste, religion, region and party, and see only the good of the country and society.

**2). Planning:** While talking about planning, Kautilya says “ the king shall plan his administrative measures after deliberations in a well-formed council. The subject matter of the council shall be entirely secret” (AI: XV). Book II of Arthasastra deals with the duties of government superintendent in detail in 36 chapters. Kautilya touches upon every possible area of administration starting from “Formation of Villages” and “Division of Land”, and describes the duties of the superintendent of respective departments. Take for example chapters III and IV. Kautilya describes in detail the plan of how a fort should be built and a blueprint of a city within the fort.

According to Thiruvalluvar, a king must act with forethought; he must reflect and consult before acting; he must choose suitable methods. He should weigh pros and cons of any act; reflect on the strengths and all resources available before acting; he should know what will be loss and what will be the gain of any action; should not act only for profit; weigh his ability before setting out for a war; **As a crow overcomes an owl in daytime, so must a king weigh his time, season, opportunity and place, then he can conquer the world**; he must “think first before beginning work”; he should find suitable methods for works; “The world will not approve of things which are done without reflection”; he should have a clear knowledge of his resources; “ he will have an end to his life if he climbs further than the end of a branch”; “even if his income is small, there will be no loss, if his expenditures are small”; the wise never hastily reveal their anger (T 47 – 50).



These sections from both vintage thinkers are lessons to our planners and policy makers on economic governance and budget making. According to them the energy and effort spent in action without adequate planning and consultation will not produce the desired results. This is what we call today “cost-benefit analysis”. We find in Arthasastra and Thirukkural excellent principles of public finance and financial administration. Our failure in economic development in India reflects our inefficient planning, administration and implementation at different levels. In this connection, I am reminded of what A.H. Hanson<sup>9[9]</sup> observed 40 years ago about Indian planning:

The men are able, the organization is adequate, and the procedures are intelligently devised. Why, then, have the Plans, since 1956, so persistently run into crisis?”

Hanson’s answer to his question is also revealing:

For various reasons, Indian planners have never treated the ‘objective function’ with sufficient respect. Their tendency is to give themselves the fullest benefit of every possible doubt... Too many of their aims are contingent upon the adoption, by various sections of the Indian community, of attitudes they are exceedingly unlikely to adopt....

Planning needs to be people oriented, and for real growth and development. Then only the forecasts of economists like Kirit Parikh that India could have a per capita income of US\$ 30,000 by the year 2047, and of an American professor, A. J. Rosensweig that India’s GDP would exceed that of Japan by the year 2025 and that India would be the third largest economy in the world (behind USA and China), could be transformed into reality.

**3). On Employment of Ministers and others:** Kautilya says, “ Sovereignty (rajatva) is possible only with assistance. “A single wheel can never move.” Therefore, a king shall employ ministers and councilors and listen to their advice”. At the head of affairs was a small body of elder statesmen, whom the king was advised to choose with the utmost care. The size of this privy council (mantri-parishad) varied. (AI: VII). ‘ Men whose ability is inferred from their capacity shown in work, should be, having taken into consideration the place and time where and when they have to work, appointed as ministerial officers (AI: VIII). ‘The king shall examine the character of ministers. He shall ascertain their loyalty and disloyalty by temptations through priest spies (AI: X). Thus, in Kautilya’s time, every aspect of the life of the individual was watched over, and as far as possible controlled by the government.

‘Those who are possessed of foresight, wise, of strong memory, bold, eloquent, skilful, intelligent, possessed of enthusiasm, dignity and endurance, pure in character, affable, firm in loyal devotion, free from procrastination and fickle mindedness, and free from such qualities as excite hatred and enmity, should be appointed as ministers, councilors and priests’ (AI: IX). The qualifications of ministers have also been described in AVIII: I, and AV: VI.

Valluvar describes in a very similar way like Kautilya: “ Let a minister be chosen after he has been tried by means of i) his virtue (aram), ii) his love for money (porul), iii) his love for sex (inbam) and iv) his fear of losing his life (uyir).” A king should not chose ignorant men through partiality; if he does, it will be the highest folly. Those who are employed should have: pleasing nature to do good; ability to enlarge the resources, increase wealth and prevent calamities. They should possess love, knowledge, clear mind and freedom from covetousness. They must be men of wisdom and endurance; their conduct must be examined daily by the king, because their conduct influences the world; “ if they act crookedly, the world will also act crookedly” (T51-52).

Chapter 64 of the Kural is a dissertation on ministers – their qualifications, characteristics and

activities. This is an important section on Statecraft. “A Minister is one who makes excellent consideration of time, means, place, manner and the difficulties. He excels in firmness, knowledge, perseverance, and protection of subjects. He gives sound advice to kings and people. Minister should possess 1) power of speech (because wealth and evil result from his speech); 2) firm in action; and 3) proper consultation. “ Far better are the seventy crores of enemies for a king, than an unfaithful minister at his side”. Chapter 68 is on management techniques and decision-making process. “A Minister is conversant with the best methods of performance; he should avoid actions that yield no benefit or bring grief to the king. Even though he may see his mother starve, he should not act hastily”. *After considerable thought, planning and analysis, one arrives at a decision. Once a decision is taken, any hesitation or delay is suicidal.*

**4). On Upright Government:** According to Kautilya, the elements of Government are the king, ministers, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army and the friends.’ ‘Excepting the enemy, these seven elements are said to be the limb-like elements of sovereignty.’ “ A wise king can make even the poor and miserable elements of his kingdom happy and prosperous; but a wicked king will surely destroy the most prosperous and loyal elements of his kingdom.” “ A wise king, trained in politics, will though he possesses a small territory, conquer the whole earth with the help of the best-fitted elements of his sovereignty, and never be defeated” (AVI: I). Chapter II of Book VI is on peace and exertion. Kautilya claims “acquisition and security of property are dependent upon **peace and industry**. Efforts to achieve the results of works undertaken are industry (vyayama). Absence of disturbance to the enjoyment of the results achieved from work is peace. The application of the six-fold royal policy is the source of peace and industry. (AVI: II).

Valluvar emphasized the Rule of Law, a good governance by law – ‘equality before the law’ and equal protection of the law’. If there is a delay in identifying and redressing the people’s grievances in time and failure in rendering justice to them according to the law, the reputation of the government will go down the drain and the government will have its natural end. Government is *to examine the crimes which may be committed, to show no favor to any one, and to inflict such punishment as may be wisely resolved on*; “**When there is rain, the world enjoys prosperity; when the king rules with justice, his subjects prosper**”; It is king’s duty to guard his people from harm and punish criminals. Kingdom will fall to ruin, if the government does not examine its works and business daily. “*The king defends the world, and justice defends the king*”. “Prosperity gives more sorrow than poverty under unjust rule” (T55).

Valluvar continues, ‘the world will embrace the feet of the king who rules with love. The scepter of justice will bring rain and plentiful crops. Unjust government will fall to ruin.’ As is the world without rain, so is the country with unjust government. If the king and his rule ensures “just government”, his kingdom will surely be blessed with seasonal rains and rich harvest, which never fail. ‘If the guardian fails to guard or if there is misrule and failure of justice, everything in the country will fail – from the milk yield of the cow to the performance of priests’ (T56).

This section is on just rule. The precepts of Kautilya and Thiruvalluvar on just government remind us of our rulers and governments, and the scams and scandals attributed to them. 1990s has been a decade of scams – the Bofors, the Bank Securities scam, the Hawala scam, the Animal Husbandry scam, the Sugar scam, Telecom scam, Fertilizer import scam, PSE disinvestment scam etc. Our governments, Centre and States, are full of scandals and corruption charges involving those who occupy top political positions. Corruption manifests itself in many forms: at the highest political level as horse-trading of MLAs and MPs; at the fiscal level in the form of evading taxes; at the corporate level in terms of financing elections by black money and so on.

As Ruddar Datt puts it, “ A strong feeling has grown in Indian political life that corruption has become a way of life. In case, you are caught taking a bribe, you can get rid of the crime by paying a bribe”.<sup>10[10]</sup> Bribe has become an incentive these days, which increases work efficiency in public offices. It is disturbing to note that corruption has brought India among the lowest in the list of countries of the world in the matter of prevalence of corrupt activities. Today government is being gradually transformed into a company/a business enterprise. Can governance become a business? Our political system needs reforms, and the political process requires purification so that political will is strengthened to take necessary action against forces that generate black money, and sow the seeds of division, casteism, hatred and communal violence. There is a need for transparency at all levels.

**5). Secret Service and Law:** Employing spies seems to have been common and part of royal administration in the ancient times. In Arthasastra we find that “ the king shall create spies under the guise of a fraudulent disciple, a recluse, a householder, a merchant, an ascetic, a classmate, a fire-brand, a poisoner, and a mendicant woman. Of these spies, those who are of good family, loyal, reliable, well trained shall be sent by the king to espy in other parts of his country (wandering spies) the movements of his ministers, priests, commanders of army” etc (AI: XI). Perhaps the least pleasant feature of political life in Arthasastra time was the espionage. The spy was an important means of keeping a finger on the pulse of public opinion. Concerning law Arthasastra says ‘ in cities and at places where districts meet, there will be three members acquainted with sacred law and three ministers of the king carrying out the administration of justice (AIII: I). Book III has twenty chapters dealing with law and justice at various levels in the kingdom.

Speaking about spies, Kural describes the requirements and role of spies in ten couplets: “Let a king consider as his eyes these two things: a spy and the book of law universally esteemed. It is the duty of a king to know quickly all that happen, at all times among all people.” ‘A spy is one who has an appearance of no alarm, who does not reveal his purpose; he assumes the appearance of an ascetic and discovers what is hidden.’ Valluvar is of the opinion that spies make discoveries, which are advantageous for the king to obtain conquests. (T59).

Ancient kings, it appears from Arthasastra and Thirukkural, feared revenge and assassins. Against such possibilities they had a network of spies. They had arrangements for authorities in various districts and villages to know all comings and goings. People who were considered dangerous to the king and his rule would disappear without trace. They had food tasters to avoid being poisoned. And, like Shih Huang-ti, they never slept in the same bed two nights in succession.

In the same line as Aristotle who said, ‘ Good government is government by law’, Valluvar holds that a breach of law, even by powerful persons like prince, may appear for the moment successful, but in the long run it can only spell trouble. A further elaboration of Valluvar’s ethical stand is in the matter of wealth. “ Wealth amassed in the midst of other people’s tears will cause distress and go the way it came.” According to Valluvar, laws are important for the safety, security and welfare of society. If these are breached, it can ultimately spell the ruin of that society itself.

**6). On Envoy/Ambassador:** Regarding qualities of envoys and ambassadors, Arthasastra enumerates: ‘the envoys and ambassadors shall make friendship with the enemy’s officers etc. They will carry out their mission even at the cost of their own lives. Envoys and messengers are mouthpieces of the king. They will not care for the mightiness of the enemy, they shall avoid liquor and women, and they will ascertain through spies the loyalty or disloyalty of the people of the enemy. They must be friendly to all and put on brightness in tone, face etc’ (AI: XVI).

Valluvar also in a similar fashion puts forward: ‘ the qualifications of an ambassador are

affection for his country, a fitting birth, and the possession of attributes pleasing to royalty. Ambassadors should have love for the king; knowledge of his affairs, pleasing attributes; power of speech (brief & pleasant); and ability to bring glory to his country. The ambassador fearlessly seeks the country's good even though it should cost him his life. An ambassador must have studied politics and must employ the art suited to the time. He is chief among ambassadors who understand the proper decorum, seeks the proper occasion, knows the most suitable place and delivers the message after due consideration. They should avoid treacherous women, liquor and gambling for they are the associates of those who are forsaken by fortune' (T69).

**7). On King's Secretaries and Courtiers:** Book V of *Arthasastra* is on the conduct of courtiers. 'A courtier possesses enough experience of the world and its affairs. He will sit by the side of, and close to the king. He shall avoid speaking slyly; he shall never make false statements; he shall never interrupt the king while speaking; he shall tell the king both what is good and pleasing.' "He shall avoid evil aspersions against others, nor ascribe evil to others; he shall forgive evil done to himself and have as much forbearance as the earth" (AV: IV). 'When employed, he, the courtier shall follow the king in his pursuits after hunting, gambling, drinking, and sexual pleasures. Ever attending upon the king, he shall, by flattery, endeavor to arrest his fall into evil habits and save him from the intrigues, plots, and deceptions of enemies. He shall also endeavor to read the mind and appearance of the king. He shall show the net revenue after all kinds of expenditures are met with. He shall also show the exact particulars of whatever work he does' (AV: V).

*Kural* has got four chapters on the qualities of ministers who move with the king and assist him. According to Valluvar, 'personal ministers or assistants are like those who warm themselves at fire, neither too close nor too far from the king; they neither whisper nor smile in the presence of the king; they should always know king's disposition and suggest desirable things to king; they should understand the king, just by his disposition; They should neither over hear when the king is in secret council or pry into it; they should be able to read the eyes of foreign kings and visitors, and reveal to the king their friendship or hatred. They should not desire the same thing, which the king himself desires.' Thiruvalluvar says that the adviser to the ruler should give firm advice to rectify errors. They should behave in accordance with the divine light ' (T70-73).

**8). On Kingdom:** Book IV is on "Removal of Thorns" which speaks about protection of artisans, merchants, remedies against natural calamities, punishment of the wicked, detection of youth of criminal tendency, protection of all types of government departments, atonement for violating justice etc. It deals with categories of violations – both human and natural, and protection against them. These are the aggregates of a prosperous and peaceful kingdom.

As *Arthasastra* holds, 'the seven elements of a kingdom are: the king, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army and the friend (AVI: I). The end of a king and his kingdom is happiness, which is secured by his strength. The three kinds of strength are power of deliberation (intellectual strength), the possession of a prosperous treasury and a strong army, and material wealth. For peace and prosperity in the kingdom, the six-fold policy must be applied. What produces favorable results is policy, and vice versa. The king who is of good character is the fountain of policy (AVI: II). "In a kingdom, forts, finance and the army depend upon the people; likewise buildings, trade, agriculture, cattle rearing, stability, power and abundance of wealth" (AVIII: I).

According to Valluvar, for the prosperity of a kingdom, three factors are indispensable: farmers (Land), merchants (Capital) and virtuous people (Labour). Valluvar's economic thought includes what later economic thinkers like Adam Smith (1776) and Alfred Marshall (1880)



proposed as factors of production – Land, Labour, Capital and Organization. In an ideal kingdom there is no starvation, no epidemics, no destructive foes, and no internal enemies. The constituents of a kingdom are: two sources of waters - one from above and the other from below (rain and under-earth water), well situated hills and indestructible fort. A prosperous nation is one in which there is plentiful harvest, industrial productivity with agricultural inputs, and consequent abundance of production and wealth.

Valluvar also speaks of the vital need of freedom from hunger and disease (“Garibi Hatao”), and from foreign invasions. Tribes and sects within the country, which incessantly fight with each other and infighting factions and anti-social elements, disturb the king’s peace and do not contribute to the nation’s prosperity. Although *a country is in possession of all excellences, there is no use of them if there is no harmony*. Valluvar’s message of harmony is very relevant to us in the midst of communal disturbances and violence. By tending to be ‘dynamic’ ‘to life’ – ‘to love’ and ‘to live together in harmony, Thirukkural is, to a great extent, a utopia. A utopia is today understood to be “a historical plan for a qualitatively different society and to express the aspirations to establish new social relations among people”. The most important feature in a country, according to Valluvar is the ruler-subject relationship. If there is a well-established and stable relationship, the country can be called a “perfect one”, for, the ruler’s real support is not his military strength, but the strength of his people. Kural speaks of people’s power here. It is people who matter and who should be the center of all programmes and projects in a country.

**9). On Fort/Fortress:** Kautilya advocated that ‘on all four quarters of the boundaries of the kingdom, defensive fortifications against enemies shall be constructed: a water fortification, a mountainous fortification, a desert fortification and a forest fortification (A II: III). Chapter IV of Book II describes the demarcation of the ground inside the fort and the buildings within. ‘The fort shall contain twelve gates, provided with both a land and water and a secret passage’. This section gives a detailed account of what should be where, like king’s palace, the apartment of gods, treasury, storehouse, houses, hospitals, shops, manufactories, guilds and corporations, roads, animals etc. \_

According to Thirukkural, a Fort is one which is an object of importance for those who live in it; which has water, plains, mountains, cool forests etc; which has extensive space within which cannot be captured, by assaulting, blocking or undermining it; which has all things needed and excellent heroes to defend; the inmates must possess excellence of action in defence; they should be able to overcome the enemy’ (T75).

**10). On Wealth:** Kautilya holds that “wealth, wealth alone is important, in as much as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realization.” (AI: VII). Wealth, virtue and enjoyment form the aggregates of the three kinds of wealth. Of these, it is better to secure the first...while describing different kinds of wealth, Arthasastra mentions that “wealth which, when obtained, increases the enemy’s prosperity, or which causes loss of men or money, is dangerous wealth; wealth which causes fear from one’s people is provocative wealth” etc (AIX: VII). \_

Chapter 76 of Thirukkural is a treatise on wealth, which reminds us of Adam Smith’s “Wealth of Nation.” According to Valluvar wealth is productive of the joys of this world. “Wealth makes people important. Wealth acquired with proper means will yield virtues and happiness; All despise the poor, but all praise the rich; All honor the poor man when he become rich; Wealth like taxes belong to the government; There is no sharper weapon than wealth to destroy the arrogance of one’s enemies. If wealth is used for noble purpose, it will earn peace and prosperity. The rich man glitters in the brightness of wealth. He enjoys life and visits places he likes in countries far and near.” Valluvar says that acquisition of wealth is important, and not to be despised. In chapter 66 he says, “Industriousness is the source of all wealth”. Valluvar

speaks about wasted wealth in chapter 101. “He who hoards wealth and does not enjoy it or utilize it to benefit others, is as good as dead, and his wealth is a waste”.

In Kurals 215, 216 and 217 Thiruvalluvar presents three smiles: First, just as the village lake (pond) is filled with drinking water so also is the great wise man endowed with wealth for the world; the second is, if wealth is in the hands of a man of propriety it is like a fruit-bearing tree ripe at the center of the village; and finally, wealth in the hands of a great man of dignity is like the medicine from an unfailing tree.

**11). On Good Army:** Kautilya writes about army and its role in many sections and chapters particularly in Books IX and X. According to him, ‘the king himself should supervise the army’ (AI:IX); the army is one of the seven elements of sovereignty (AVI: I). Kautilya describes the various kinds of army in a kingdom in Book VII, chapter VIII. The army should be arrayed on a favorable position, facing other than the south quarter, with its back turned to the sun, and capable to rush as it stands (AX). ‘The kshatriya caste is the best for army’ (AI: XXXI). His minister and priest should encourage the army. Astrologers and other followers of the king should infuse spirit into his army by pointing out the impregnable nature of the array of his army, his power to associate with gods, and his omniscience; Stationing the army so as to stand abreast is called a staff-like array (*danda*). Stationing the army in a line so that one may follow the other is called a snake-like array (*bhoga*). Stationing the army so as to face all the directions is called a circle-like array (*mandala*) (AX: VI).

Valluvar has given great emphasis to **people** whose political and economic support was the prized possession of the king, and **army** and its exploits. “Valour, honor, following in the footsteps of its predecessors and trustworthiness constitute the safeguard of an army. The army that conquers without fear is the chief wealth of the king. A good army is one that stands firm and does not desert to the enemy.” What is envisaged here is a “death-defying army of dare-devils”. ‘It must be capable of united resistance. An army cannot last long without brave generals.’ *What if a host of rats roar like the sea? They will perish at the mere breath of the cobra* (T77).

Valluvar rightly says that it is the affection of the people that keeps the morale and efficiency of the army. ‘If people hate the army, then it will dwindle. The army in garrison has to be used in active service; otherwise they will lose their efficiency. A soldier’s achievement is in his Valour; on the days he has not received wounds in action are days lost to him.’ The brave soldiers do not care for their lives at all. If a soldier can so die as to fill with tears the eyes of his ruler, the king, such a death is the best tribute’ (T78).

Centuries later, Machiavelli in his *Prince* said: “ The chief foundations of all States are good laws and good armies... where there are good armies, there must be good laws....” I am reminded of Late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Sastri’s popular slogan “ Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan” during the Indo-Pak war.

**12). On Agriculture:** Chapter I of Book II is on “Formation of Villages”. ‘The king shall protect agriculture from oppressive fines and taxes, and cattle from thieves... and disease. He must protect his citizens, and peasants in particular who are the ultimate source of prosperity.’ Chapter II is on “Division of Land” where it is said that ‘there must be cultivable land, pasture land, well developed forests’. While describing the duties of the superintendent of agriculture, Arthasastra explains how he shall cultivate state land, raise wet and dry crops and supervise harvests etc. “ Lands may be confiscated from those who do not cultivate them, and given to others” (AII: I). “ The destruction of crops is worse than the destruction of handfals, since it is the labour that is destroyed thereby; absence of rain is worse than too much rain” (AVIII: II).

Valluvar believes that the world depends on agriculture. “Though laborious, agriculture is

the best form of craft that sustains all on earth and is the worthiest of crafts. Farmers are the lynchpin of the world; they alone are independent citizens, others are dependent on them; if the farmer's hands are slackened, even ascetics will fail in their meditation. *If a man does not attend to his land personally, it will behave like an angry wife and yield him no pleasure.* More than ploughing is manuring, then weeding; more vital than water management is plant protection." Valluvar has emphasized the importance of agriculture and its primacy over all other occupations. In the same line Daniel Webster stated: "Farmers are the founders of civilization". If the ploughmen cease to work, the entire economy will collapse. We also find in the Kurals the elements of "Green Revolution" except high yielding variety of seeds: extent of ploughing, manure and fertilizers, water-management, weeding at the right time, and protection against pests and diseases (T104).

**13. On Social Evils and other problems:** Arthasastra speaks about various social issues and problems. 'Those orphans who are to be fed by the state and are put to study science and the duties of the various orders of religious life etc shall be employed as classmate spies' (AI: XII). "The king shall provide the orphans, the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance. He shall also provide subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying and also to the children they give birth to." Kautilya also sees the issues from people's angle. For instance, "when, without making provision for the maintenance of his wife and children, any person embraces asceticism, he shall be punished with the first amercement;<sup>11[11]</sup> likewise any person who converts a woman to asceticism" (AII: I).

Book VIII of Arthasastra deals with vices and calamities in detail. It describes the calamities of the elements of sovereignty; troubles of the king and of his kingdom; troubles of minister, troubles of the army, troubles of the treasury, troubles of men (vices like gambling, drinking, addiction to women etc). Kautilya advises that 'in order to avoid internal troubles, the king should keep under his control the powers of finance and army' (AVIII: II). "Of what kind the king's character is, of the same kind will be the character of his people" (AVIII: I).

The evils of poverty are personified in kurals as a sinner and a demon. When the demon takes possession of a person, the latter loses all joy in life. "Poverty is cruel; it afflicts people; "one may sleep in the midst of fire; but by no means in the midst of poverty"; it destroys the greatness of the kingdom; poverty brings many miseries to a country. The words of the poor are profitless; the destitute that are lazy to work consume their neighbor's salt and water; a poor man is a stranger to others; prolonged poverty destroys one's past greatness and the dignity of his speech"(T105).

While describing begging as an act, the saintly poet Valluvar says, " Begging may be pleasant if it is done with cheerfulness. As long as there are those who give without refusing, there will be those who stand in front of them to beg. All the evil of begging will disappear at the sight of those who generously give alms." Writing on the evils of begging, Valluvar condemns it. **If Creator of the world has decreed begging as a means of livelihood, may he too go begging and perish.** The ancient poet goes to the extent of saying that even God deserves punishment if he allowed begging. "Though poor, if a man is determined not to beg, he becomes the lord of the universe." *The crop that is grown by hands is far sweeter than the gruel collected by begging.* "There is nothing more disgraceful than begging; there is no greater folly than to remedy the evils of poverty by begging". The maiden earth laughs at those who are lazy and idle and live on begging." (106-107):

We are living in a very challenging environment. Of the 6 billion people living on the planet earth today, 4.8 billion, i.e. 80 percent of the world population, live in the developing countries. These 4.8 billion receive only around \$ 6 trillion, i.e. 20 per cent of global GNP.

Imagine the demography of the next 25 years: about 2 billion will be added to the planet of which 95 per cent will be in the developing world. Besides the critical global problem of poverty, the demographic disequilibrium is another challenge to be faced now.<sup>12[12]</sup>

Global inequalities in income have increased alarmingly in the last hundred years. More than 30,000 children die everyday from preventable diseases. Some 120 million children are excluded from primary education. About 500 million women are illiterate. 1.5 billion people have no safe drinking water. One woman dies for every 260 live births – which is one woman in a minute. More than 20 million have died of AIDS, 34 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, and everyday 15,000 are infected. About 790 million people are hungry and 1.2 billion live on less than one dollar a day.<sup>13[13]</sup> I am reminded what Subramani Bharatiyar, a Tamil Freedom Movement poet, wrote: “If there is even one individual person without food to eat, I shall destroy the world.”

**14. Characteristics of Enemy:** Like Kautilya, Valluvar lays down pragmatic political wisdom on grounds of expediency, when he advises the king not to go in for an ill-advised strife with a powerful enemy. Kautilya in Book X explains all the wisdom relating to war. He advocates under certain circumstances going straightaway against the stronger enemy first, so that a subsequent engagement against the ‘assailable’ enemy may not be necessary. Valluvar says, in organizing the effective defence of his state, the king will guard against mighty rulers, holy men and learned scholars.

Kautilya devotes the whole chapter III of book VII to the attitudes and behavior of weak kings towards a strong monarchy. His guidelines are not always ethical as Valluvar’s generally are. One example is: Kautilya claims “the king should always make peace with an equal or superior king, and crush down an inferior.” In other words, aggrandizement is human nature, and that a power superior in strength should launch a war against an inferior, and that war keeps a nation’s blood circulation regular.<sup>14[14]</sup> Kural 893 is in line with an injunction given by Kautilya in Book VII, chapter III: “Do not foolishly go to war against a superior ... you will be reduced to nothing as a foot-soldier opposing an elephant”.

**15. On Citizenship:** Chapter III of Book I of Arthasastra narrates the respective duties of four castes and of the four orders of religious life as determined by the three Vedas (*Sama*, *Rik* and *Yajus*). “Harmlessness, truthfulness, purity, freedom from spite, abstinence from cruelty, and forgiveness are duties common to all. The observance of one’s own duty leads one to Svarga and infinite bliss (Anantya). When it is violated, the world will come to an end owing to confusion of castes and duties. Hence, the king shall never allow people to swerve from their duties; for whoever upholds his own duty, ever adhering to the customs of Aryas, and following the rules of caste and divisions of religious life, will surely be happy both here and hereafter. For the world, when maintained in accordance with injunctions of the triple Vedas, will surely progress, but never perish”. Kautilya concludes chapter IV of this section in the following words: “This people (loka), consisting of four castes and four orders of religious life, when governed by the king with his scepter, will keep to their respective paths, ever devotedly adhering to their respective duties and occupations”.

Valluvar explains the role of citizenship in chapter 103. “Nothing advances one’s family prestige better, than his service to the community”. As Rajaji interprets, ‘a community prospers if its members are industrious and possess sound knowledge’. According to Valluvar, ‘the effort of a man who toils ceaselessly for the betterment of all people, will be crowned with success. The person who is committed to community service will not waste his time and energy and will not consider his own dignity; he must be prepared for great suffering for the benefit of others.’ “A community will fall uprooted by misfortune, if there are no persons to build it up.”



#### 4. Conclusions

About the same time, around 4 centuries before Christ, there were the renowned Greek philosophers like Thales, Plato and Aristotle, and Chinese philosopher, Confucius. Kautilya's *Arthasastra* immediately followed Plato's *philosopher king* and Confucius' *Noble Prince*. *Thirukkural* came two centuries later. As S M Diaz observes,<sup>15[15]</sup> though similar in many aspects, Thiruvalluvar stands out different from all these earlier philosophers and political thinkers who recorded their ideas on state polity, as they perceived it. Valluvar's ideas, however, are basically different in approach, being refreshingly conditioned by the prevailing *Aram* (moral, ethical and spiritual virtues) and the healthy rationality of Tamil community of that period. His concepts are based on *Dharma* of a universal character in time and place. Valluvar's moral tone is missing in all his predecessors.

The line of thinking in Kautilya's *Arthasastra* is oriented to practical politics, of almost the same pragmatic approach as in Machiavelli's 'prince'. In the classical Hindu view of personal evolution, there are four aims or ends in life: 1) *Artha* (accumulation of material wealth and family, implying all the strategies of survival, all the diplomacy of private and public politics and the manipulation of power and wealth); 2) *Kama* (the quest for pleasure and love); 3) *Dharma* (the laws of moral action and religious rituals); and 4) *Moksha* (spiritual release, redemption and transcendence).<sup>16[16]</sup> The *Arthasastra* is devoted to the first aim in life, that is science of property and material success, and this success includes political and diplomatic strategy, which aimed, according to Kautilya, at uniting all kingdoms under one king, Chandragupta. Kautilya seems to have had little time for other aspects of life. His book has no *Dharma*.<sup>17[17]</sup> It is totalitarian and secular in nature. It is pragmatic in the sense that there is no permanent friend or enemy in politics – “my enemy's enemy is my friend”. It maintains that royal ordinance can rightly override all other sources of law, which is disagreed by many theorists.

It is remarkable that the quintessence of some of the modern ideas of planning, management and behavioral sciences are found elegantly and succinctly enshrined in some of the kural and some sections of the *Arthasastra*. The State, those days, was primarily the king, and so, kingship is dealt with in substantial detail in these works – the qualitative aspects of a king's personality and leadership such as education, training for leadership and personal conduct. While most of their precepts would primarily apply to king's handling of projects, finance and warfare, many of the instructions on normal life's requirements will apply equally to educated and virtuous people of today.

Once Rev. P. Percival, a missionary in Jaffna, wrote of the Kural, “Nothing in the whole compass of human language can equal the force and terseness of the couplets in which Valluvar conveys the lessons of wisdom”. *Thirukkural* reveals that the doctrine of non-violence obviously has had a great influence on him. He teaches deep faith in God, justice, mercy, compassion, friendliness, harmony and hard work. It is one of the few literary works that is being quoted widely by academicians, politicians and administrators as well as common people. While being sworn in as the president of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam said that a country needs to have the characteristics as enshrined in *Thirukkural* and quoted from the Kural: “*Pini inmai Selvam Vilaivinbam Emam, aniyenba Nattirku vainthu*”. That is “**The important elements that constitute a nation are: being disease free; wealth; high productivity; harmonious living and strong defence.**” It makes deep sense in this fast-moving world. If only there is more forbearance and patience, mutual respect and understanding among people, the world would become a better place with more love, more justice more peace, for all of us to live in.

**Table 1 - Economic and Political Ideas in *Arthasastra* and *Thirukkural*****Chapter wise division**

<b>SL. No.</b>	<b>Economic Ideas</b>	<b><i>Arthasastra</i></b>	<b><i>Thirukkural</i></b>
1.	Life, Excellence, Qualities and Duties of a king	Book I:VI,VII,XIX VI:I VIII:II	Chapter 39-46
2.	Planning	I:XV II:III&IV	47-50
3.	On Employment of Ministers & Others	I:VII-X VIII:I V:VI	51-52
4.	On Upright Government	VI:I&II	55-56
5.	Secret Service and Law	I:XI III:I	59
6.	On Envoy/Ambassador	I:XVI	69
7.	On King's Secretaries & Courtiers	V: IV&V	70-73
8.	On Kingdom	VI:I&II VIII:I	74
9.	On Fort/Fortress	II:III&IV	75
10.	On Wealth	I:VII	66, 76, 101

		IX:VII	
11.	On Good Army	I:IX, XXXI VI:I VII:VIII X:VI	77-78
12.	On Agriculture	II:I VIII:II	104
13.	On Social Evils and other problems	I:XII II:I VIII:I&II	105-107
14.	Characteristics of Enemy	X VII:III	87-88
15.	On Citizenship	I:III&IV	103